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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Chrono?

National Intelligence Council

8 August 1986

Ambassador Morton I. Abramowitz
Director, Bureau of Intelligence
and Research
Department of State

Dear Mort,

Graham joins me in thanks for the fine
outing yesterday. I attach some quick comments
on the paper you gave us: in a word, we find
some of INR's points well taken, others
apparently based on misconceptions.

Cheers,

rf.

Hal Ford
Acting Chairman

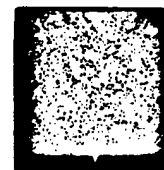
Attachment:
As stated

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(INR's) Proposed Modifications to NFIB Process

1. The NFIB, or a subcommittee, should schedule production of SNIEs or NIEs.

The NFIB does schedule the production of Estimates now. The schedule is an NFIB document, all Agencies participating in the process at various stages. In preparing these draft schedules for NFIB it takes a lot of contact with policymakers, shoeleather, double-checking, and interagency consultation to whomp up these schedules. If the NIC were not to act as the NFIB's executive agent in this process, who or what would? Would a better result ensue?

2. No draft should be written prior to NFIB agencies meeting to discuss a Terms of Reference.

We agree. No such drafts are or should be so written, except where necessary in cases of extreme fast tracks.

3. Ideas for Terms of Reference should be solicited from member agencies by the NIO prior to the TOR meeting.

Good point. The NIC now does some; we will do more.

4. The TOR should ask specific questions, keyed to policy concerns.

Could not agree more. You will notice that there has been much more of this in Concept Papers/TORs in the past few months. Graham and I are pushing the NIOs to do exactly this: consult with policymakers, and then craft succinct Key Questions which lay out exactly why each particular paper is necessary, and just what its policy relevance is to be. We will continue this process.

5. Drafters should solicit views from their counterparts in member agencies on the content of their sections during the drafting process.

Good point. The NIC now does some; we will do more.

6. Drafting responsibility for individual (S)NIEs should be shared among member agencies whenever possible.

As written, this proposal is a little ambiguous. If the point means that non-CIA officers should draft a number of estimates, then we agree completely: this has always been NIC practice, and in recent months the proportion of non-CIA drafters has been growing the more; we want still more of this to happen, and will even be glad to have more INR drafters. If, however, proposal #6 means that various Agency officers should do portions of given Estimates, then experience largely argues against this: such practice can and does work on certain very large military or technical projects, where separate portions, annexes, etc.,

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do so lend themselves. But on the great majority of Estimates, the needs are for overview, cohesion, progression of thought, and an absence of agglomerating.

7. NIOs should not be the drafters, whenever possible. In the event an NIO is a drafter, someone else (e.g. a senior DDI officer from an area not directly related to the issue at hand) should be the chairman for the coordination process.

There are arguments pro and con for this position. As has already occurred in the past, we will try to have other, non-involved NIOs chair sessions where the papers have been drafted by an NIO.

8. Estimates should not be placed on the NFIB schedule until agency principals have had at least two full working days to review a clean Final Draft, distributed after the last planned coordination session.

Agree. It will continue to be so, except in cases of extremely fast tracks.

9. Agencies requesting a clean-up session prior to NFIB scheduling should be afforded that request.

If late moment changes cannot be made telephonically, clean-up sessions can and have been called. Whether to hold such meetings, however, depends on the circumstances. Legitimate where the coordination sessions have left a lot of strings hanging, or where significant new data have appeared, or where any agency head has felt upon reflection that the Key Judgments or text did not, as phrased, adequately present the Estimate's message. Less legitimate where once again the same old arguments are to be raised which were discussed during coordination (with agreement or dissents), or where a policy office at some agency wishes at a late moment to complain about some message its intelligence representative has already signed off on.

10. When a vacancy occurs in a "National Intelligence Officer" position, - - nominations should be solicited from member agencies.

This has been, is, and will continue to be the NIC's practice.

11. NIOs should be encouraged to host periodic briefings and roundtables to air differing views and establish common data bases outside of the context of NIEs.

Good point. The NIC now does some of this -- in fact, monthly warning meetings play a major role in this regard. We will nonetheless do more in this regard, and through various venues.

12. At the NFIB, NIOs should give more substantive briefings on the content of the estimate, rather than focusing merely on the areas of disagreement. Agencies holding differing views should be permitted to bring their analysts to participate in the briefings.

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NIOs do not now focus merely on the areas of disagreement at NFIB. NIOs are under instruction at NFIB to get at once to the pith and so-what of an Estimate: where did the exercise come from, what is its key message, are there any major problems, and should the Estimate be released to liaison. NIOs are also under instruction -- and will so remain -- not simply to repeat all the Estimate's Key Judgments, it being assumed by the NIC that the Principals have done their homework, have read at least the KJs, and are already aware of the matters at hand. Also, it is assumed that the Principals are of sufficient stature themselves to participate in any discussions of Estimates which may take place at NFIB, the exception being large, complex technical Estimates. NFIB is not meant to be a forum for reopening and redebating the issues unless special problems arise.